



brisbane grapevine

LIZZIE LOEL

Shouk Cafe opened in Paddington in March this year and has gone from strength to strength. It is the brainchild of partners **Adi Shabtai**, an Israeli native, and Sunshine Coast-born **Guy Frawley**. Shouk means marketplace in Hebrew and that's generally where inspiration has come from this charming little local. It's a venue with decades of history that include BYO haunts with French, Spanish and Italian incarnations. There are two separate sections divided by a service bar covered in hand painted mosaics behind which is a lounge and larger dining space sporting lovely views of the jacaranda-dotted hills of Brisbane's inner western suburbs.

Breakfast and lunch on weekends is standing room only and recently the pair decided to open at night with an eclectic menu that draws inspiration from Israel and the Middle East as well as the southern Mediterranean.

Hummus kawarma is utterly delicious. Creamy, tangy hummus sits at the base of a terracotta dish topped with spiced lamb, cannellini beans and chickpeas. Drizzled with lemon juice and olive oil, it's a cracking dish, perfect for sharing. Calamari and octopus is served over a spicy tomato and coriander sauce and falafel tacos sport avocado, green chilli paste and toum, a lemony garlic emulsion. Popcorn rolled in harissa garnishes this interesting number and borscht, a classic beetroot soup, is garnished with beef shank, potato and cabbage with sour cream, dill and a side of black bread.

Mains focus on the protein content, with the exception of two dishes - a pumpkin stuffed with pearl cous cous, cranberries and za'atar and eggplant done seven ways. Duck breast is glazed in pomegranate and citrus and roasted with baby beets, dragon quail egg and white asparagus, a chicken terrine sits on a salad of fig and labna and the piece de resistance, lamb shanks cooked for 48 hours, is served with pickled onion hearts and a fragrant cinnamon jus. 14 Collingwood St,



Paddington; phone (07) 3172 1655.

Around the corner from Shouk is the newly opened **Paddington Epicerie and Deli** - a food store and cafe. Again the place is packed to the gunnels at weekends - it is situated next to the Paddington Antique Centre and is in the heart of this eclectic shopping precinct, so passing trade every day is high.

The cabinet groans daily with freshly made salads and charcuterie, tarts, sandwiches and rolls, and you can buy soups, finger foods like arancini balls, gourmet pies and sorbets and ice creams as well as all the usual deli lines like olives, roasted peppers and cold cuts. 153-155 Latrobe Tce, Paddington; phone (07) 3367 8819.

Lennon's Hotel was a famous landmark in the heart of the CBD throughout the '50s and for decades thereafter. Now the site has been rebuilt and is home to **Next Hotel**, the city's newest boutique hotel that boasts a number of innovations and features. Shower and sleep pods, for example, are available for time-poor corporate travellers lacking sleep but who don't have time to take a

room. Freshen up and take a nap, then get back on the road.

There's a rooftop bar and the restaurant overlooking Queen Street Mall is named **Lennon's** in honour of the venue's past. You can take an escalator or lift to the open-feel space, which has a casual, contemporary bistro vibe and comfortable, organic aesthetic. Chunky navy and white striped clipboards hold the menu, much of which is organised under headings such as salads, pizzas, main courses, and steaks, chicken and fish are cooked on the Parrilla Grill. The open kitchen has an attractive marble pass, tables and chairs are brushed wood and there's greenery and wrought iron accents and huge windows that slide back to let in the cool breezes that come off the nearby river. A salad of heirloom beets and lentils with pear and goat's curd and a creamy cashew dressing is a fresh and light starter, as is smoked trout served chilled with creme fraiche.

Mooloolaba spanner crab linguine has a hint of chilli and garlic, and the pizzas are wood-fired. There are several cuts of beef, spice-marinated spatchcock and whole local whiting stuffed with fennel and rosemary, which are all available off the grill.

If you order a steak you get the choice of several sauces - bearnaise and cafe de Paris butter, peppercorn and bordelaise and chimichurri and horseradish cream. The chimichurri is vivid and punchy, perfect with the charry eye fillet, and while you have to work for the whiting (local whiting is very small and bony) the flesh is sweet and flaky. Level 2, 72 Queen St, Brisbane; phone (07) 3222 3232.

Over the river in West End a small cafe has undergone a bit of a makeover. **Fillo & Co** has always made great coffee and offered delicious home baked Greek sweets, including baklava, almond crescents, honey cake and much more. Juices, smoothies, acai bowls and a variety of more traditional breakfasts involving eggs and bacon, avocados, grilled tomatoes and toasted sourdough and Turkish bread are also available.

Open souvlaki of haloumi, mint, Greek salad as well as slow-cooked lamb, chicken and other flavours are popular, and so are the cones of churros served with cinnamon sugar crust and a hot chocolate dip.

Recently the cafe began opening on Friday and Saturday nights offering locally caught seafood from a fisherman who supplies direct to Fillo & Co.

Dependant on the daily catch, the menu changes from week to week but dishes like whitefish saganaki, whitebait fritters and fish stewed in peppers with skordalia are typical of what's on offer. 68 Boundary St, West End; phone (07) 3844 5444.

Above: Lennon's Poolside and interior.